



Encryption, National Security, and the Two Kingdoms

The two kingdoms doctrine is a robust application of Biblical content on the temporal realm and God's come-and-coming kingdom. Both kingdoms are God's kingdoms. One is ultimate, the other is penultimate.

The link below takes you to a 35 minute Science Friday interview with three cryptologists. The exchange offers an opportunity to examine how God's word endorses good order yet holds human institutions, such as government, in check.

<http://www.npr.org/2013/10/04/229206779/cracking-open-encryption-standards>

Recent revelations about the extent of NSA surveillance have put even the standards by which encryption systems are designed into question. Encryption experts Matthew Green, Phillip Zimmerman, and Martin Hellman discuss what makes a code secure and the limits of privacy in the modern age.

Discussions of national security, privacy, oversight, checks-and-balances, and similar themes are now related to our vocation and our everyday lives as internet technology users and as those who teach the church. The two kingdoms doctrine provides a basis for analysis of the relationship of temporal government and power under the divine canopy of God's sovereignty—a matter of considerable concern for several biblical texts such Genesis 1-11, Luke, Amos, Paul, Micah, and others. (For a list of Biblical content to examine see the home page article on Two Kingdom Texts, <http://twokingdoms.cune.edu>)

The interview linked above does not address the Biblical themes. Rather, it raises many of the current issues about government oversight, the importance of national security, the danger of excessive government power, and the role of informed and educated expertise in creating and managing modern information and encryption systems. The discussion can readily be used to illustrate intersections of the two kingdoms and also to highlight opportunities for work in these fields as part of one's vocation—as both provider and as critic.

Some questions and topics might include:

1. The distinction between national security and the individual security of the citizen (privacy, First Amendment religious rights, etc.) cannot be marked with a bright line. What biblical concepts should inform how this distinction is defined and adjusted in a sin-plagued world?
2. Is NSA monitoring and storing of so much information on the individual in danger of becoming a Tower-of-Babel situation?
3. In Rom 13:1ff, Paul articulates a powerful endorsement of the governing authorities. These same governing authorities will eventually execute Paul, though Paul does not seem to challenge that outcome in 2 Tim., his last letter. This has been a topic of interest to Christians for centuries. Join that discussion.
4. A doctrine of vocation question: what roles and stations should young, educated Christians seek in the decades to come in order to serve as light, salt, and leaven in the areas of information, encryption, and security?
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